

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

MAY 89

Please complete and return the following questionnaire for our reference file on May Show artists.

FULL NAME: Timothy G. O'Neill **PRESENT POSITION** Legal Assistant

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH: August 1, 1959 Cleveland, Ohio

CATEGORY/PRIMARY MEDIA: B & W Photography

ART TRAINING (Schools, Scholarships, etc.):

The School of Visual Arts, New York, N.Y.
1977-1979

EXHIBITIONS IN WHICH YOUR WORK HAS BEEN SHOWN (include location and year):

None

COLLECTIONS THAT NOW INCLUDE YOUR WORK:

None

AWARDS:

None

We would appreciate having a statement about your philosophy and work as an artist—either general or something specific about the piece(s) selected for this year's May Show to aid us in the preparation of gallery talks and in the release of publicity materials. For more space, use the back of this sheet.

See Attachments.

EARTH, TEXAS

"Earth, Texas" was inspired by the writings of Jack Kerouac -- in particular, "On the Road." Like Kerouac, I was seized by a crazy, five-thousand-mile idea,¹ which carried me off to the furthest corners of America. Like Kerouac, my motive was to soak up the essence of America, to discover what makes this country different from all others.

At first, my travels were merely an aimless blur of images -- what Kerouac calls "the up and down America":

[Y]ou've all seen it ..., there, with side-streets, trees, night, mist, lamps, cowboys, barns, hoops, girls, leaves, something so familiar and never been seen it tears your heart out....²

I roamed westward, past railyards and hot dog stands, until the road grew straight and silent. Under an increasingly gigantic sky, I passed through a string of desolate farming communities, tiny dots on the map: Friendship, Texas; Progress, Texas; Muleshoe, Texas; Lariat, Texas; Circle Back, Texas -- and finally Earth, Texas.

In Earth, Texas, I found it: a blend of optimism and hyperbole that is characteristically American. This extravagant, Barnum & Bailey puffery is more visible out West -- and it makes even the most shameless huckstering somehow charming.

¹ J. Kerouac, Visions of Cody, pp. 38, 60-61 (1959); cf. J. Kerouac, Desolation Angels (1960).

² J. Kerouac, Book of Dreams, p. 7 (1961) (emphasis in original).

In "Earth, Texas" we see a BIG sign, holding out hope of BIG things -- but there is nothing behind it. Indeed, the town is comprised of little more than the sign itself. It is a trumpeting, hopeful sign in a vacant, hopeless place.

Why do I smile when I see this sign? Why am I charmed by it? The very thing that makes me smile, the very thing that charms me, is the very thing that makes America unique.

MOLAR ROCK AND ANGEL ARCH

"Molar Rock and Angel Arch" was inspired by the writings of Edward Abbey -- in particular, "Desert Solitaire." Abbey was an outspoken conservationist; in his fierce love for the desert southwest, I found a kindred spirit. Abbey wrote about the harsh grandeur of the canyon country, and its power to cleanse the soul.

Year after year, I return to the canyon country because of the exhilarating visual stimulus it affords. This photograph was taken in a remote corner of Canyonlands National Park in southern Utah. It captures the stark, surreal quality of the terrain, which is dominated by nightmarish forms that find echoes in the paintings of Miro and Dali.

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